

Wasatch Mountain State Park

CHAPTER FOUR

... And They Governed Wisely

Men of every generation are pioneers. Inside each soul there burns a dream that somewhere there is a wilderness, some place, some achievement or some task that is still unfound, unimagined or forgotten.

Those who tamed the wilderness lands of Provo Valley clearly saw their pioneering challenges. In desolate places they built their homes, churches and communities. Other pioneers crossed barren wastes in covered wagons. Some created new irrigation canals and streams, while others felled trees in forest lands and created new business, industrial, agricultural and mining pursuits. Still other pioneers formed the laws and provided the governing direction for orderly growth and development of the budding Wasatch County.

Such pioneering spirit and enthusiasm were found in each succeeding generation in the county as accomplishments and achievements were recorded year after year.

As the county's second century dawned, one of the greatest pioneering ventures ever dreamed of in the valley began to take shape. In the beautiful mountains west of Midway there was proposed a park and recreation development second to none in the state.

To be known as the Wasatch Mountain State Park, the area of some 25,000 acres would be restricted for playground, resort, camping and sports activities. The primitive beauty of the region would be preserved, and inadequate or over-commercialized ventures would be prohibited.

Much of the impetus for the development came from the Wasatch County Commission headed by Guy E. Coleman, from President Henry D. Moyle, counselor in the First Presidency of the LDS Church, and Harold P. Fabian, chairman of the Utah State Park and Recreation Commission.

The idea won almost immediate approval as it was advanced and talked about in 1958 and 1959. So enthusiastic was everyone that overzealous land promoters nearly ruined the entire project. Late in 1959, the prices of land zoomed so high that state officials decided they could never buy the 25,000 acres needed at prices within the state's budget.

This crisis was the call for cooperative pioneering, and the county commission under Mr. Coleman's direction, and H. Clay Cummings, former Wasatch Stake President and special representative for the Park and Recreation Commission, began efforts to negotiate reasonable prices for options on the land.

So successful were their efforts that by the middle of January, 1960, Mr. Coleman was able to assure state officials that landowners in the area were fully behind state efforts and would cooperate in every way. At a meeting on Friday, January 15, 1960, the Park and Recreation Commission, after hearing the assurances, voted to accept the offer of cooperation and authorized work to go ahead towards acquisition of the needed land. One member of the state commission remarked at the meeting that the *Wasatch Park* "... would be the greatest thing that could be done for the state."

President Moyle also attended the meeting and offered to donate 100 acres of land in the fringe areas of the proposed state park.

About a week later, Utah Governor George D. Clyde added his sanction and approval to the actions of the Park and Recreation Commission, stating:

"Such a year-around playground as is planned would be close to the center of the state's population and could become a great asset."

Gov. Clyde further promised to work closely with park commission officials in their efforts to obtain options on needed land. With the governor's approval, the park commission then announced on Wednesday, January 27, 1960, that it would spend \$350,000 on the Wasatch Park from funds authorized for site development by the 1959 Utah Legislature. The sum was specified to be used in obtaining some 508 acres as a nucleus for the state park.

In the meantime, officials of the commission and private enterprises interested in developing facilities within the park began making drawings and proposals for park features. Newspapers of the state backed the proposed park, and even ran questionnaire forms asking what facilities would be most advantageous and acceptable. Plans were also being formulated to ask the 1961 Utah Legislature for at least \$1 million dollars more to pick up options on the remaining 20,000 acres.

Typical of the support given the park development is this editorial in the June 15, 1960 issue of *The Deseret News* and *Salt Lake Telegram*, entitled "A Priceless Investment for Utah":

"What would the Mountain West be like today if, instead of public-spirited, far-visioned men, the developers of the Yellowstone region in Wyoming had been speculators interested in a fast dollar?"

"What value would there be to the public today if Zions and Bryce and the Grand Canyon and any number of other such wonders had been surrounded by honky-tonks or by private estates from which the public was barred?"

"What man today even considers the original dollar cost of protecting and developing those areas, compared to their priceless value today?"

"These questions are germane to the announcement this week that the Utah Park and Recreation Commission is prepared to acquire immediately the 'heart' of the proposed Wasatch Mountain State Park and will ask the Legislature to appropriate funds to acquire the rest."

State Park Nearing Reality in Wasatch

Special to The Tribune

HEBER — Wasatch Mountain State Park took a step nearer reality with the signing of options by three Midway citizens who owned property on the proposed park site.

Options securing 2,400 acres of hill ground, wooded areas, pasture and farm lands were signed by Alma, Joseph and Nephi Huber, owners of land first homesteaded in 1863.

OPTIONS ON ACREAGE owned by Karl, Vern, Eugene Bernard and Clarence Probst still remain to be signed. If signed it will complete transactions for the land.

And, as the project moves ahead, plans for a Swiss-type village are being made for Mill Flat.

H. Clay Cummings, representative of the State Parks Commission, is in charge of the transactions.

Some Are More Equal Than Others

25 June 1987

Wave Editorial

Anyone who enjoys visiting our state parks should feel angry and betrayed.

Last March the Governor's office ordered Wasatch Mountain State Park to reserve the entire Cottonwood Loop campground for the Labor Day weekend in order to provide accommodations for a promotional group. Park policy for reserving campground sites is quite particular and rigid. Reservations can be made no earlier than three months in advance and with each call you can reserve no more than one site. To reserve another site, you need to hang up and call back. 47 units in the Cottonwood Loop were blocked off with one phone call.

The state's disregard for its own policies gives public trust a swift kick out the door. This one act infers that only the citizens of Utah are expected to abide by the policies of the state. If a policy conflicts with the personal desires of state officials, then exceptions are to be made.

The group that is staying in the campground is suppose to be part of an international promotion group, that some have said will have a positive influence on the valley.

Labor Day weekend is a traditionally busy time in Heber Valley anyway, so it's a lame argument to say that this group is going to have a more positive impact than any other. In fact the contrary could be true. People who traditionally visit our valley may feel burned by this incident and decide to take their travels elsewhere. And what is the definition of *promotion group*? That's a dubious title, just like some officials use the term fact finding mission as a cover for junket. Two or more Winnebagos traveling together could qualify as a promotion group.

An act such as this can only widen the ever increasing rift between state employees and citizens. The parks belong to everyone, and no one, and are not a private haven for bureaucrats and state officials. The last thing any responsible government wants is to appear elitist, especially during tough economic times.

It seems ironic that the reservations are for Labor Day weekend. This day, as we all know, is set aside to pay deference to the men and women who pay the taxes which support our parks. This blatant act of arrogance spits in the eyes of public trust and makes further governmental actions suspect.

Any third grader who has had some American history will tell you that one of the premises this country is founded on is the ideal that all men are created equal. Perhaps certain state officials operate on the premise that some men are created more equal than others.



